

Minutes of Joint Meeting with Belmont-Redwood Shores School Board of September 29, 2009

One Twin Pines Lane

CALL TO ORDER 6:30 P.M.

ROLL CALL (Council)

COUNCILMEMBERS PRESENT: Feierbach, Lieberman, Dickenson, Wozniak, Braunstein

COUNCILMEMBERS ABSENT: None

City Staff Present: City Manager Crist, City Attorney Zafferano, Finance Director Fil, Interim Public Works Director Borrmann, Police Chief Mattei, Parks and Recreation Director Gervais, Community Development Director de Melo, Recreation Manager Brunson

ROLL CALL (School District)

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Benelli, Matthews, Wright, Clancy

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: Stulbarg

District Staff Present: Superintendent Orta-Camilleri, Assistant Superintendent Weaver, Assistant Superintendent Hungerford, Administrative Assistant Ribotta

COUNCIL/SCHOOL BOARD DISCUSSION ITEMS

Introductory remarks by Mayor & Board President

Mayor Braunstein thanked the School Board, School District staff, the City Council and City staff for their efforts in putting together this meeting. He highlighted several positive aspects of the City of Belmont, and noted that the City and the School District support the same youth. He noted that this evening's meeting is an opportunity to have a dialog on items of mutual interest.

School Board President Clancy thanked School District staff and the City Council. She noted that there are many programs available for the benefit of the community.

State budget and impacts to redevelopment/schools

Finance Director Fil provided an overview of the State deficit and the actions that have been taken to address this situation. He outlined the impact on the City of Belmont from the Proposition 1A borrowing. He noted that the State is required to pay back any borrowing before it borrows a subsequent time. He described the multi-year impact from the taking of redevelopment monies, including the indirect impact and implications on funding for the Belmont-Redwood Shores School District. He outlined details of the net loss after payments are made by the City of Belmont for debt service and other agency payments. He explained that this will jeopardize future redevelopment activities, notably economic development. He noted that the State dropped its appeal on previous litigation regarding similar funding takeaways.

Board President Clancy explained that the Belmont-Redwood Shores School District is a basic aid district, and it does not receive any ERAF (Education Revenue Augmentation Fund) monies. In response to her inquiry regarding future credits against mandated payments, Finance Director Fil clarified that the City of Belmont has not made a decision yet, and it will likely be resolved in court before the next payment is due in May of 2010.

Board President Clancy expressed the need to continue a dialog on this issue, since the School District relies on these funds.

Councilmember Lieberman noted that the \$2.2 million payment from RDA monies to the School District represents three percent of the District's operating budget.

In response to Board Member Mathews, Finance Director Fil explained the differences between previous lawsuits against the State and the newly-proposed lawsuit. He noted that there is a stronger nexus between redevelopment monies and school districts, and that the State has failed to meet the test of how the redevelopment agency monies scheduled to be taken are to be spent to eliminate blight.

Discussion ensued.

Mayor Braunstein noted that the City of Belmont is strong in its determination to fight this issue.

First day of school issues/Safe Routes to Schools/School Resource Officers/Emergency Preparedness

Superintendent Orta-Camilleri stated that the City of Belmont works closely with the schools to address school safety, and that it is a positive working relationship. She thanked the Police and Public Works Departments for its efforts.

Interim Public Works Director Borrmann described the actions of the Public Works Department in preparation for the new school year, including the inspection and repainting of crosswalks.

Police Chief Mattei described the safety work performed at Central Elementary School. He noted that the majority of the problems have been resolved, and that the situation at that site is unique. He outlined the visibility of the Police Department during the first few days of school. No complaints were received from the community regarding school opening traffic, which he attributed to good outreach prior to school starting.

Police Chief Mattei described school activities and programs, including Safe Schools, Rapid Notify System, emergency preparedness, the use of a School Resource Officer, and an ongoing good working relationship with the School District.

Interim Public Works Director Borrmann highlighted the Safe Routes to Schools grant expenditures that have occurred in recent years, and noted this has been a coordinated effort with support from the School District.

Board Member Benelli thanked the City for its matching contribution on these projects.

Councilmember Feierbach expressed a desire to get more students to walk to school.

Police Chief Mattei noted that not many students walk to school. He stated that the Belmont Safe Schools group has discussed this issue, and that some schools are better suited for pedestrians.

Councilmember Feierbach noted that the City performed some shrubbery cleanup on Cipriani Boulevard and Alameda de las Pulgas, and cars are now parked in those areas, which impede pedestrians. She expressed a desire for future discussions regarding this matter. She noted that there are no sidewalks on many streets. She would like to encourage the concept of a walking school bus.

Councilmember Wozniak noted that the Green Advisory Committee has discussed the walking school bus concept for schools. There is a need to encourage walking.

Board Member Wright commended the Public Works Department for its efforts, and noted it has made a noticeable difference. She commented that partnering helps resolve issues. The School District sent letters to neighbors outlining the school schedule, which likely resulted in fewer complaints.

Board President Clancy thanked Chief Mattei, and noted that the Police Department is always responsive to school needs. She expressed appreciation for the visibility of the department.

Public Participation in the Public Process

Board President Clancy noted that the school district is on the same election cycle as the City. She noted that the boundaries of the school district differ from the City in that it includes all of Redwood Shores, and some streets in the Cities of San Carlos and San Mateo.

Discussion ensued regarding the level of interest in serving on the School Board and the City Council.

Councilmember Wozniak stated that the City makes good use of its website for information, and school activities are often announced at City Council meetings. She described the electronic signup system available through the City's website.

Councilmember Dickenson noted that the Planning Commission provides knowledge on land use and process.

Councilmember Feierbach explained that she maintains a personal web page, and makes use of Twitter.

Board Member Benelli noted that the School District received 14 applications following last year's vacancy on the Board. She noted that the majority of regular school board races have been uncontested in recent years. She concurs with the need to get more people interested, and noted that the campaign process may be intimidating to some.

Mayor Braunstein noted that in a contested race, candidates have to fight for the position to prove their worth, and successful candidates may be more inclined to stay.

Councilmember Lieberman stated that with five members on a board or council, each member brings a different background. Diverse experience is useful, and civic involvement is important.

He described the 2+2 process. He noted that there is much public participation when there is a big issue, and that rewards are likely higher at City Council than at the School Board level.

Board Member Wright stated that the 2+2 process is beneficial. She noted that the members do not often agree, but it keeps the relationship strong.

Status of New Shores School

Superintendent Orta-Camilleri stated that the new school for Redwood Shores is being constructed off site and assembled on site. She thanked the City of Redwood City for its cooperative efforts with this project, including the waiver of many fees. She described the planning process and the modular process for the new site. She noted that the project is currently within budget and may be completed under budget.

In response to Councilmember Wozniak, Superintendent Orta-Camilleri explained that the City of Redwood City requires the use of gray water for irrigation, as well as a dual plumbing system.

Councilmember Lieberman stated that he has followed this project through the 2+2 subcommittee process. He commended the School District staff for its management of the project.

Board President Clancy noted that the School District has limited administrative staff. She commended staff for keeping the project under budget. She noted that the school district is experiencing growth.

Field Joint Use Agreement

Parks and Recreation Director thanked the City Council and the School Board for its efforts regarding this new agreement. He noted there is a need to work in partnership, especially during difficult economic times. He stated that the proposed new agreement reflects the partnership that exists between the two agencies. A level of consensus was reached.

Councilmember Dickenson thanked the staff of both agencies for their efforts. He noted this is a complex agreement addressing many issues.

Councilmember Lieberman expressed concern regarding the State budget impact on the City and the School District. He noted that the agreement is the result of thought and creativity of the two agencies.

Councilmember Feierbach acknowledged the Parks and Recreation Commission's input on this agreement.

Board Member Mathews stated the agreement is an impressive document and noted it is important to work together.

Mayor Braunstein noted that the agreement is an example of when things go right.

Opportunities for Future Partnerships

City Manager Crist described previous and future grant opportunities that are beneficial to the schools. He noted that walkability is an important topic. He described potential future improvements to the City's paper trails and walking paths. He noted that there have been housing opportunities for school employees. He stated that the new garbage franchise agreement will provide recycling educational opportunities.

In response to Councilmember Lieberman's inquiry regarding subsidized housing opportunities targeted for teachers, City Attorney Zafferano advised that staff could look into this issue and provide information.

In response to Councilmember Feierbach, Superintendent Orta-Camilleri advised that some teachers live locally and many commute, but she noted the school district does not have hard data.

Councilmember Dickenson stated that emergency preparedness training is important. He noted that the City Council continued its funding of the School Resource Officer position. He stated that water and recycling programs that students learn as children will be carried into adulthood.

Discussion ensued regarding recycling programs at schools.

Board Member Mathews stated that a parent at Fox School runs the program at that location.

Board Member Wright described the recycling program at Central Elementary School. She noted that the school received a Presidential Award for its efforts, and that the playground is made from recycled material.

Board President Clancy stated that recycling has been occurring at all schools for many years. She expressed a commitment to partnering with the City for the future. She noted that grants have been a priority for the school district. There are many opportunities to be creative.

Councilmember Lieberman noted that commercial and school recycling are important elements in the new franchise agreement.

Mayor Braunstein stated that potential City-to-parent communications could be a future topic of discussion. He outlined potential communication tools such as a town hall forum and the use of the Council Chambers by the school district. He expressed his appreciation of the availability to openly discuss topics of interest.

Student Achievement Update

Assistant Superintendent Weaver stated that the Belmont-Redwood Shores School District provides high-quality enriched instruction which leads to high achievement. She described the API (Academic Performance Index) system, which has been in place for 11 years. She noted that all district schools score over 800, and four have scored over 900 on a scale of 1000. Belmont-Redwood Shores schools have achieved California Distinguished School status, and Central Elementary is a Blue Ribbon School. She outlined levels of proficiency in achievement, and

noted there are gaps that are being addressed through intervention. She invited the City Council and the public to participate in school programs and activities.

In response to Councilmember Feierbach, Assistant Superintendent Weaver explained the disparity in API scores among schools. She noted that sample size is a component, some schools have fewer students, more English-language learners, or are more economically disadvantaged. She noted that API is only one method of measurement. She explained that programs are consistently implemented across the district.

Council/School Board Closing remarks

Board Member Benelli stated that this has been a rewarding meeting. She noted that her term on the School Board is ending in November. She invited residents to get involved in local schools. She commented that there is much promise for the future of the schools.

Councilmember Lieberman thanked Mayor Braunstein for suggesting this meeting, and concurred that they should be held on a more frequent basis. He acknowledged City staff for working closely with School District staff.

Councilmember Wozniak stated that she previously served on the 2+2 subcommittee and was involved in the process of the joint use agreement. She thanked parents for their time commitment and involvement. She announced the upcoming Candidate Forum for City Council candidates, and that School Force would be holding its Save the Music Festival on October 4th.

Board Member Wright stated that it is beneficial to meet when there are not difficult decisions to be made.

Councilmember Feierbach thanked the outgoing School Board members for their service.

Board Member Mathews noted that the outgoing School Board members' absence will be felt. He thanked those involved with setting up the joint meeting, and stated it was very productive.

Councilmember Dickenson stated that the City and School Board work collaboratively and it is important to maintain an open dialog.

Mayor Braunstein thanked everyone for being involved, and stated it was a productive meeting.

Board President Clancy stated that the 2+2 subcommittee process will remain in place for ongoing dialog, but noted it is important to discuss issues among all members of each agency.

ADJOURNMENT at this time, being 8:45 P.M.

TERRI COOK

City Clerk

Meeting Tape Recorded and Videotaped
Audio Recording 737